Coaching Philosophy

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To provide an environment where the youth and adults of Hudson and surrounding communities can participate in recreational and competitive soccer programs by developing strong soccer skills, sportsmanship, teamwork, honesty and respect.

Original Document by Director of Coaching: Ken Prater 2011
**HSA COACHING PHILOSOPHY**

- **Have fun playing soccer** - Training and games should be fun. When the game stops being fun, players tend not to play well and both coaches and players may get frustrated and eventually leave the game.

- **Focus on long term development, not winning games** - The coaches ultimate goal should be on long term playing and child development, not short term goals. Coaches should use age appropriate games and activities during training. Ideally all players should play equally in games. At the least, each player should play half of the game. Encourage and have all players play all positions. Don’t just play your best player as forward so that your team can score more goals. This will help with the overall development of all the players on the team.

- **Be a role model for the players** - As the coach you are a role model for the players. Your temperament and behavior during training, games and off the field activities will set the tone for how your players will respond and guide them in what is deemed as acceptable behavior.

- **Sportsmanship** - Emphasize teamwork, respect and fair play. Create an environment of respect for the coaches, teammates, opponents and referee’s. Create and recognize value in the friendships and hard work it takes to become a cohesive team.
BASIC COACHING METHODOLOGY

As coaches we need to focus on “age appropriate training priorities”. This is important because youth players have varying abilities and characteristics from one age group to another. There is a natural progression that is recommended so that players can develop the appropriate soccer skills, tactics, etc. based on their stage of development. Following this approach will enhance player development, as players will have greater chances of achieving success and become more confident in their abilities.

The four components of coaching soccer:

1. Skills (or technique) - These are the skills used to play the game, i.e. the fundamentals. This includes things like dribbling, passing, shooting, receiving, tackling, juggling, heading, etc. Along with making sure players have fun, this is the most important area for youth players to focus on.

2. Tactics - Tactics for youth soccer focus largely on decision making, i.e. how players can make the correct decision given a particular situation. We should try to understand the progression of tactics and coach the players in the proper sequence, so that players are comfortable solving easier problems (1v1, 2v1) before they move on to solve more complex ones (4v4).
   
   A. Players 6 and under - No tactics. For players at this age it is all about play and skill development.
   
   B. Players 8 and under - Rudimentary tactics. Knowing which direction to attack and which goal to defend. Learning to share the ball (pass).
   
   C. Players 10 and under - Basic tactics. Knowing their options when they have the ball (pass, dribble, shoot) in 1v1, 2v1 and 2v2 situations. Starting to understand the basic role of defenders, midfielders and forwards. Learning basic defending technique.
   
   D. Players 12 and under - Intermediate tactics. Understanding the role of the defender, midfielder and forward. Knowing their options when they have the ball (pass, dribble, shoot) in 2v2, 3v3, and 4v4 situations. Understand defending technique (pressure, hold, and cover). Learning the thirds of the field (attacking, middle and defending) and preferred options in each third. Basics of combination play.
   
   E. Players 14 and under - Advanced tactics. Understand the thirds of the field (attacking, middle and defensive) and understanding the implications of choices in each third and how it relates to the tactical objective of the game. Good use of combination play (wall passes, take overs, overlaps, etc.). Defending in pairs. Building from the back. Controlling the speed of the game.
   
   F. Players 15 and up - There should be a continued emphasis on progression of Intermediate and Advanced tactics. Understanding the role of specific positions (e.g. left winger, center forward, center defender) and how each applies to the team tactical plan and overall game strategy.
3. **Psychomotor, Cognitive and Psychosocial Development** - For youth soccer players, these all relate to whether the player is having fun playing soccer, and other aspects such as how they deal with winning and losing, their level of motivation, and how they interact with teammates, coaches and their parents.

   A. **Players 6 and under** - Players at this age are very egocentric (all about ME), they have a very short attention span, primitive eye-foot coordination, full speed or stopped, and have little concern for “team” activities.

   B. **Players 8 and under** - Players at this age are growing. There is improvement in pace and coordination from age 6, but the immaturity of their physical abilities is still obvious. They are starting to show limited ability to tend to more than one task at a time. There is a great need for approval from adults. The desire for social acceptance starts to show and they now grasp they are part of a “team”.

   C. **Players 10 and under** - During this period, children gain a tremendous amount of physical strength, endurance and power. They have the ability to remember and follow more complex instructions and focus longer on a task. They begin to think in advance. Peer group attachment and the pressure generated by peers becomes significant.

   D. **Players 12 and under** - Muscles mature, strength and power become a factor in performance. Coordination improves greatly. Players should be able to problem solve and multi task. Usually eager to learn. Peer review and status can directly impact self-esteem.

4. **Physical Fitness** - Fitness for youth soccer players can be largely achieved by just letting them play soccer, although players starting at age 12 may start incorporating speed and conditioning into training games and activities. Fitness outside of training should be encouraged as well as proper nutrition before, during and after training and games. Though we cannot control what happens away from the fields, we should still encourage good nutrition, hydration and exercise.
TRAINING - PREPARING FOR SUCCESS

There are 2 very important factors in leading a fun and successful training session.

The first is to be prepared. Having a plan ready and the field set up before players arrive is a major factor in a successful training session. Your training plan, on field activities and coaching points should focus on only one topic (i.e. defending, attacking with penetration, etc.). Do not coach multiple topics during your training session.

The second is to get all players in the “flow”. The “flow” is when the players ability matches the task. We want to create a learning environment that will challenge and allow players of all abilities to succeed. A good example of this would be juggling. If all players are asked to beat the best players high score, they will get frustrated. The player with the best score will no longer be challenged. Asking each player to beat “their” score keeps all players challenged and in the “flow”.

We should also incorporate Economical Training into our sessions. Economical training refers to the inclusion of more than one of the four components of the game in each activity. As an example, running sprints or laps only works on Fitness, but running with a ball will work on dribbling skills and fitness.

Training sessions should progress thru 4-5 stages, with each stage getting progressively more complex or difficult. The session should progress as follows:

- Warm up - as much dynamic movement with a ball as possible
- 1st activity - low pressure or challenge, high chance for success
- 2nd activity - added pressure or challenge, 50/50 chance for success
- 3rd activity - game like activity
- 4th activity - small sided game - Try not to stop the game or coach unless there is a significant point for correction. Coach over the game or on field when possible.
When training, we want the players to get as much time with a ball or doing game like activities as possible. What the players do as they arrive is as important as what we have them do in training.

**Things to avoid when players arrive and during training:**

- Shooting on goal waiting for practice to start - this activity is not game like and provides very little time on the ball. Have them play keep away, cone golf of other games before practice.
- Avoid lines - players waiting in lines are not participating. Find activities that keep all players moving.
- Avoid laps - while conditioning is important, we should avoid laps during training (economical training) and avoid laps as a form of punishment/discipline.
- Avoid lectures - explain activities quickly and concisely. Start play and freeze for quick corrections. Coach over the activity when possible.
- Avoid full field scrimmages - small sided games teach spacial awareness as well if not better than full field games and will give more touches to the players.
**Key Training Priorities - 6 and under “Let’s Play”**

The following basic training priorities are recommended by US Youth Soccer for coaches of players 6 and under. A focus on having fun and helping players start to develop the basic skills needed to play soccer is key.

**Skills:**
- Dribble with both feet
- Introduce dribbling with outside of foot
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Soft first touch

**Tactics:**
NO TACTICS - Coaches should not try to teach players at this age about tactics. This will lead to frustration both for the players and the coach. The focus for players 6 and under should be learning technique, especially dribbling. Just let them play!!

**Key Training Priorities - 8 and under “Love the Ball”**

The following key training priorities are recommended by US Youth Soccer for coaches of players 8 and under. A focus on helping players develop the skills (not tactics at this stage) is critical as it will serve as the foundation for skills and tactics that will be introduced when these players move on to the next age group.

**Skills:**
- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Introduce changes of direction and turns
- Soft first touch
- Introduce shielding
- Introduce proper shooting technique (with inside of foot and laces)
- Introduce passing only to players who can dribble out of trouble
- Introduce juggling with both feet (allow one bounce between juggles if needed)

**Tactics:**
NO TACTICS - Coaches should not try to teach players at this age about tactics. This will lead to frustration both for the players and the coach. The focus for players 8 and under should be learning technique, especially dribbling. Just let them play!!
Key Training Priorities - 10 and under “Love the Game”

The following key training priorities are recommended by US Youth Soccer for coaches of players 10 and under. A focus on helping players develop these skills and basic tactics (and not intermediate or advanced tactics at this stage) is critical as it will serve as the foundation for skills and tactics that will be introduced when these players move to the next age group.

Skills:
- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Changes of direction and turns
- Soft first touch
- Receiving the ball with inside and outside of foot
- Shielding
- Shooting with both feet (with inside of foot and laces)
- Passing with inside and outside of both feet
- Juggling with both feet and thighs (allow one bounce between juggles if needed)
- Introduce throw-ins
- Introduce proper defending technique
- Introduce block tackles
- Introduce basic goalkeeping technique

** Make sure to spend equal time practicing with both feet - This is very important!! **

Tactics:
- 1v1 (attacking and defending)
- 2v1 (attacking and defending)
- 2v2 (attacking and defending)
- Introduce basic attacking concepts (possession and support)
- Introduce basic defending concepts (pressure and cover)
Key Training Priorities - 12 and under “The Romance”

The following key training priorities are recommended by US Youth Soccer for coaches of players 12 and under. A focus on helping players develop these skills and basic/intermediate tactics (not advanced tactics at this stage) is critical as it will serve as the foundation for the skills and tactics that will be introduced when these move to the next age group.

Skills:
- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Quick changes of direction and turns
- Speed dribbling in traffic
- Soft first touch
- Receiving the ball with all parts of the body
- First touch away from pressure
- Shielding
- Shooting with both feet (with inside of foot and laces)
- Power and accuracy in shooting
- Introduce proper volleying technique
- Passing with inside and outside of both feet
- Passing to feet and passing to space
- Introduce chipping the ball
- Introducing long lasses (using laces)
- Juggling
- Throw-ins
- Proper defending technique
- Block tackles
- Heading (attacking and defensive)
- Specific goalkeeping technique

**Make sure to spend equal time practicing with both feet - This is very important!!**

Tactics:
- 1v1 (attacking and defending)
- 2v1 (attacking and defending)
- 2v2 (attacking and defending)
- Combination plays (short passes and wall passes)
- Build on basic attacking concepts (possession, support, penetration)
- Build on basic defending concepts (pressure, cover, balance)
- Introduce position specific training (right fullback, left midfield, etc.)
Key Training Priorities - 14 and under “The Commitment”

The following key training priorities are recommended by US Youth Soccer for coaches of players 14 and under. A focus on helping players develop these skills and tactics is critical as it will serve as the foundation for the skills and advanced tactics that will be introduced when these move to the next age group.

Skills:
• Dribble with all sides of both feet
• Dribble out of trouble
• Dribble past someone
• Quick changes of direction and turns
• Speed dribbling in traffic
• Soft first touch
• Receiving the ball with all parts of the body
• First touch away from pressure
• Shielding
• Shooting with both feet (inside of foot and laces)
• Power / accuracy in shooting
• Introduce proper volleying technique
• Passing to feet and passing to space
• Ability to chip the ball
• Accurately play long passes (using laces)
• Juggling
• Throw-ins
• Proper defending technique
• Block tackles
• Poke tackles
• Introduce slide tackles
• Heading (attacking and defensive)
• Specific goalkeeping technique

** Make sure to spend equal time practicing with both feet - This is very important!! **

Tactics:
• 1v1 (attacking and defending)
• 2v1 (attacking and defending)
• 2v2 (attacking and defending)
• Combination plays (short passes, wall passes, overlaps and takeovers)
• Build on basic attacking concepts (possession, support, penetration, width, depth, mobility)
• Build on basic defending concepts (pressure, cover, balance, compactness and depth)
• Build on position specific training and how each position relates in to the tactics of the game.